DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 026 681 CG 003 565

By-Purkey, William W.

The Self and Academic Achievement.

Florida Educational Research and Development Council, Gainesville.
Pub Date 67
Note-39p.
Available from-J. B. White, Executive Secretary, Florida Educational Research and Development Council, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32601, Research Bulletin v3 n1 Spr 1967 ($1.00).
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$2.05
Descriptors-*Academic Achievement, Academic Failure, *Gifted, Individual Development, Personality Development, *Self Actualization, *Self Concept, Self Esteem, Self Evaluation, Student Teacher Relationship, *Underachievers

It is becoming clear that the difficulties which people experience in most areas of life are closely connected with the ways in which they see themselves and the world in which they live. There is considerable evidence that student failures in the basic school subjects, as well as misdirected motivation and lack of committment (characteristic of the underachiever, the dropout, the culturally disadvantaged, and the failure), are, in large measure, the consequence of faulty perceptions of the self and the world. The self is defined here as all the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions which an individual holds about himself. This paper reviews literature (1) relating the self to academic achievement, (2) the self-concepts of gifted students and underachievers, and (3) the task of the teacher in building positive and accurate self concepts. (BP)

ED026681

FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

RESEARCH BULLETIN

The Self and Academic Achievement

003565

Volume 3 Spring, 1967 Number 1

RESEARCH BULLETIN

The Self and Academic Achievement

by

WILLIAM WATSON PURKEY

Psychological Foundations of Education
College of Education, University of Florida

Published by

THE FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

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Published Quarterly

Annual Subscription $3.00
Individual Copies $1.00
(10% discount for 5 or more)

Copies may be secured from J. B. White, Executive Secretary, Florida Educational Research and Development Council, College of Education, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida 32601

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PREFACE

Interest in the influence of the concept of self on learning has increased greatly within recent years. Consequently, the Florida Educational Research and Development Council, acting upon a request from a research and studies committee of the Florida Council on Elementary Education, authorized the publication of a Research Bulletin on *The Self and Academic Achievement*. Dr. William Watson Purkey, a member of the Department of Foundations, prepared the manuscript. He was assisted by Mr. Richard H. Nichols, graduate assistant. More than 30 studies in the field of achievement and self-perception were reviewed. In this way, the findings of many prominent studies in this area are made available to the teacher in the classroom.

The material contained in this Bulletin can be of great value to teachers as they work with the underachiever and the disadvantaged child. It should stimulate new approaches to many of our educational problems, such as the teaching of reading or working with those who are often called "discipline problems". Teachers' study groups or seminars will find this material and that listed in the bibliography useful for many thought-provoking sessions. We wish to express our appreciation to Dr. Purkey for the excellent work he did in preparing this manuscript.

Spring, 1967 J. B. White, Executive Secretary

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
I.	Self: An Overview	3
II.	Creation of Self	5
III.	Self: Invisible Price Tag	9
IV.	Self and Academic Achievement	15
	Relation between Self and Academic Achievement	15
	How the Gifted Student Sees Himself	19
	The Onset of Academic Underachievement	21
V.	Task of the Teacher	24
	Building Positive and Accurate Self Concepts	27

I. SELF: AN OVERVIEW

Oh, wad some power the giftie
gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder
free us,
And foolish notion.

Robert Burns, *To A Louse*

At the present time there is a new development in the helping professions which aims to supplement existing theories on the nature of human behavior. This fresh approach is different from the two better known approaches of Freudianism and Behaviorism in that it gives primary importance to the individual's perceived Self and stresses an "internal" let's-look-at-it-from-his-point-of-view attitude.

Gradually it is becoming clear that the difficulties which people experience in most areas of life are closely connected with the ways in which they see themselves and the world in which they live. There is considerable and increasing evidence that student failures in the basic school subjects, as well as misdirected motivation and lack of commitment characteristic of the underachiever, the dropout, the culturally disadvantaged, and the failure, are in large measure the consequence of faulty perceptions of the Self and the world. At the elementary level it now appears that children's difficulties in basic academic skills seem to be a consequence of their beliefs that they cannot read, write, handle numbers, or think accurately, rather than to basic differences in capacity. Many students have difficulty in school, not because of low intelligence or poor eyesight, but because they have learned to see themselves as incapable of handling academic work. Also, this seems to be true in special school activities such as athletics, dramatics, public speaking, student leadership roles, music, and club participation. Indeed, judging by the studies presented in this monograph, it would seem difficult to overestimate the pervasive impact of the Self on human accomplishment.

At this point a definition of Self is necessary. The Self may be defined as all of the beliefs, attitudes, and opinions which an individual holds about himself. It usually includes everything

covered by "I" or "me" or even sometimes "mine". The Self is more than a possession, it is the center of the individual's universe of experience and is the criterion against which the world is measured. It is a person's awareness of his individual existence and it tells him who and what he is. For these reasons, it is capitalized throughout this paper in recognition of its' unique and distinct perspective to the individual.

As postulated by Arthur Combs, Carl Rogers, and others, the Self has numerous properties, some of which are these:

- The Self develops out of the individual's interaction and communication with his environment; it is a social product.
- The individual's perceptions of himself and his environment will determine his behavior.
- The individual's continuous struggle to maintain and enhance the perceived Self is the basic motive for all behavior; thus, people are always motivated.
- The Self strives for consistency and behaves in ways which are consistent with itself; Self-concepts are followed in a compulsive manner.
- Learning is more rapid if it is perceived by the learner as related to positive aspects of Self.
- The Self determines what is perceived, and the closer the experience to Self, the greater its effect.
- The Self can be changed through school experiences.

Our discussion of these assumptions and how they relate to the Self and academic achievement is organized into five parts: Part I provides an overview, Part II explains the origin of Self, Part III deals with its pervasive influence, Part IV considers the relationship between Self and academic achievement, and Part V analyzes the task of the teacher.

II. CREATION OF SELF

First was the golden age . . .
Where all were content.
When food came of itself . . .
And spring was everlasting.
Then did milk and sweet nectar
Flow for all.

Ovid, Metamorphoses

In the beginning of his relatively independent life, the newborn baby is rudely ejected from a warm and cozy womb into a world of crashing sounds, bright lights, and painful sensations. He experiences an Alice-in-Wonderland world of shapes and sounds; where blurred figures suddenly loom into giants, then shrink to nothingness. Sounds, tastes, pressures, smells, sights come and go in his completely unorganized perceptual world. He looks out with one eye, then the other, and begins the arduous and life-long task of making sense out of a non-sensical world.

Within seconds after birth, with his first gasps for breath, the infant is busy adapting to his new environment. Within days he is developing and practicing tiny patterns of action or perception or both. Within weeks he is organizing more complex patterns, and he looks out at the world with both eyes. Within months he is directing his eyes accurately to objects which he wishes to observe. He opens and closes his fists and begins to repeat acts for their own sake. Soon he is repeating acts which produce interesting results, such as kicking his legs to make a bell vibrate. At about this time he begins to realize that certain events occur together, and that certain things recur on regular schedule. Shortly he begins to associate these things, and he learns that handling by an adult is associated with the pleasure of feeding.

By the time the baby is a few months old, he is deliberately responding to other people. He smiles and coos and delights in imitating the familiar. For instance, working saliva in one's mouth with a swishing sound will usually bring a similar response from a three- or four-month old infant. Already he is flinging his hands toward dangled objects, and he is learning to reach and grasp so that he can investigate the world more fully.

Long before his first birthday, the baby has learned a tremendous amount about the world in which he lives. He knows

what many objects look and feel like and what they can do, their value to him. He has slid slippery things through his hands, he has stuck his fingers in holes, he has tasted everything he could put his mouth to, he has dropped things to watch them fall, and he has splashed water to enjoy the spray. The baby has also learned many things about himself. He is aware of the major parts of his body and how they relate to each other, and he has formed boundaries between his body and the outside world. Most importantly, he has begun to sense his value and worth as a human being: he is beginning to create Self.

Sometime in the first year of life, much earlier than most parents would believe possible, the infant has developed a myriad number of perceptions about Self, the thoughts and feelings which make up his awareness of his individual existence. Psychologists call these perceptions his "self-concept", but to the child, it's who and what he is. When he begins talking, he will speak of these perceptions as simply "me".

During the first year the infant is utterly dependent upon the love and care of those responsible for him. The nature of this love and care has an overwhelming influence on the way the infant sees himself and the world. If the child's experiences with important people in his life are good, then he can begin to expand himself. The development of his capacity to love is facilitated by his being loved and by being surrounded by people who love each other. His intelligence is increased by being exposed to an enriched and varied perceptual environment. His Self is enhanced by his being treated in a way which tells him that he is wanted, liked, valued, amusing, healthy; a good baby. For good or ill, the child is molded by the repeated behavior of the significant people in his life.

Unfortunately, many young children are psychologically crippled by inadequate love and care. This crippling of babies by parents and other important people is not done on purpose, of course. Few parents want to be failures at raising children. Perhaps this crippling process can be compared with the ancient Chinese practice of foot-binding. In earlier China, mothers would tightly bind their baby daughters' feet with bandages and keep them bound for years, resulting in terrible deformity. This was done because tiny feet and a mincing, hobbling walk were considered attractive features for a Chinese girl. In time, the

crippled daughter would grow up, marry, and have daughters of her own. The terrible irony is that this crippled mother would then get out the bandages and proceed to cripple her own daughters, not because it was either good or bad, but simply because it is the way she had learned to rear children by being reared that way herself.

Many small children are crippled by parents who were themselves crippled psychologically as children. Their capacity to love is permanently inhibited in its development because important people fail to provide warmth and affection when it is needed most. Their intellectual development is stultified because they are reared in a deprived and sterile atmosphere. Their Selves are hobbled, distorted and defeated because participation with the meaningful people in their lives have given meanings to the Self which are pervasively derogatory.

Any behavior of significant people that causes a young child to think ill of himself, to feel inadequate, incapable, unworthy, unwanted, unloved, unable is crippling to the Self. For instance, many parents dearly love their children, but do not respect them. The child's offer to help is rejected, his questions go unanswered, his rights are abused. Some parents who would never dream of striking an adult think nothing of striking their own children. Many children are treated in a manner which tells them that they are unable to cope with a complex and threatening world. Parents seem unaware that they must have confidence in their children before their children can have self-confidence, and that a child must respect himself before he can respect others.

A curious paradox is that sometimes the very desire to be a good mother or father will lead the parent to mistake duty for love. The parent thinks that "I'm doing this for your own good" when he is excessively critical of the child, pointing out every mistake and picturing it as a child's personal failure. Children of such parents begin to question themselves and their abilities, to see themselves as failures and incompetents. Other parents, insecure and fearful themselves, become over-protective of their children. They shield them from every danger, real or imagined, near or remote. The child is taught that the world is filled with dangerous snakes, people, sickness, germs, death, falls, injuries, dogs, plants, sharp objects, and just about anything else that the child cannot possibly face alone. With the best of intentions, parents sometimes give their children negative perceptions

of themselves and the world which will deeply affect all future learning. In summary, experiences that make a person feel ill about himself, that make him feel inadequate, may be just as crippling as Chinese foot binding.

III. SELF: INVISIBLE PRICE TAG

By the time a child enters school he has already formed a picture of his value as a human being. Like an invisible price tag, his Self-attitudes are with the child wherever he goes and influence whatever he does. For some children, the tag reads: "damaged goods". For others, it may read "a fine value" or "an excellent buy" or "top value, one of a kind" or simply "soiled, marked down". Each of these invisible price tags is a social product, given to children by the important people in their lives.

Some children enter school for the first time with the feeling that they are "helpless, unable to cope". Others enter school already calibrated, their tag reads "highly accurate" and they respond carefully to classroom questions. For other children the opposite is true, for they have never been encouraged to be careful, accurate, neat, or even honest.

When the invisible price tag is negative, it may be more personally destructive than a physical handicap, for even the most insensitive parent or teacher can usually recognize and take into account a crippling physical handicap. A negative concept of Self, however, is often overlooked because sometimes we fail to take the time and effort to be sensitive to how children are seeing things.

So it happens that children walk into class the first day of school with tags that read "unworthy person", "unsafe with people", "physically weak", unliked. Morgan presents a vivid picture of how these Self attitudes are related to anti-social behavior.

Morgan, (1961). In a study completed at the University of Florida, Morgan compared the Self-perceptions of aggressive with withdrawn children to determine whether there are differences in perceived Self between children who exhibit aggressive behavior at school as opposed to those who exhibit withdrawn behavior. Morgan assumed that while both types of children present classroom problems, aggressive children would have more adequate Self attitudes and higher overall intelligence than would withdrawn children.

The method used was to identify and study fifteen aggressive and fifteen withdrawn children selected from 465 referrals to to the office of a school psychologist in Orange County, Florida.

The students selected were chosen on the basis of comments of teachers, by observations of each student in the classroom, and through a testing situation by the school psychologist. The classification of the students' behavior as predominantly aggressive or withdrawn was confirmed by three other psychologists. Each child was given an extensive testing, which included both measures of intelligence and measures of attitudes toward Self.

Morgan found that the two groups did not vary significantly in intelligence, and, as predicted, the total Self scores were significantly higher for the aggressive children, as were subscores on how the aggressive child saw himself in relation to others, to school, and as being free to accomplish his own goals. Seeing oneself as "unliked by people" was found in the Self attitudes of all children in both groups. Over half of the students in each group saw themselves as "unwanted by or unacceptable to people," "threatened by external environment", and "an unworthy person". The aggressive group saw themselves as physically strong and as "able to assert oneself", while as expected, this Self-attitude was missing from the withdrawn children. The withdrawn group saw themselves as "unable to cope with people", "unsafe with people", and as "physically weak". Also, as expected, these responses were not found in the aggressive group.

Morgan concluded her study by stating that the most significantly different perception of aggressive children was seeing themselves as "able to assert". The most significantly different perception of withdrawn children was seeing themselves as "unable to cope" with people.

On the basis of Morgan's study, it appears that there is a close relationship between Self attitudes (invisible price tags) and individual behavior. The following study by Radke-Yarrow, Trager, and Davis shows that not only is there a connection between Self-attitudes and behavior, but that in preschool and early school age children there is awareness of racial and religious group membership which contribute an abasing or enhancing quality to the child's Self concept.

Radke-Yarrow, Trager, and Davis (1949). Using 250 early elementary school children, five to eight years of age, in kindergarten, first, and second grades, the investigators studied the early stages of social awareness and attitude development.

Perceptions and attitudes concerning racial and religious groups were obtained from each child with the aid of a series of pictures (Social Episodes Test) which permit projections of content and attitudes regarding racial and religious groups and which permit the examiner to probe particular aspects of attitudes. Pictures are of simple social situations involving children on a playground, in a schoolroom, and on a city street. A major hypothesis of the study was that group membership is one significant aspect of the Self-concept of children.

Many of the children interviewed indicated a sense of their own group membership. This was seen particularly in regard to racial belonging. The researchers reported that children place themselves in their own race and often attach an affective meaning to it. In addition, there is a competitive aspect in the effect: "I'm glad I belong to this group and not that group".

The results of the study indicated that Self-awareness of belonging to a particular religious group was not apparent in all children. Jewish children showed greater awareness than either Catholic or Protestant. The investigators found that non-membership in a group may be sensed by a child with as much import for his Self-picture as membership in a group: "I'm glad I'm not a Jew" or "She wishes she were white" — as a Negro girl said in referring to a Negro child in a picture.

The Radke-Yarrow, Trager, and Davis study demonstrates that group consciousness and social prejudices are present in the preschool and early school years, and the dangers involved in the assumption that group consciousness does not arise until adolescence or beyond. It further illustrates that the child's perceptions of his social environment do not occur independently of the development of his invisible price tag.

A more recent study by Wattenburg and Clifford highlights an important characteristic of the Self: it's resistance to change. This study shows that attitudes toward Self are pervasive, long lasting, and predictive of future performance.

Wattenburg and Clifford, (1962). This research clearly indicates the close relationship of the beginning student's concept of Self to his later achievement in reading. In this investigation it was decided to study the relationship of kindergarten children's Self-attitudes to subsequent school achievement in elementary school. The two investigators wished to determine

whether associations previously reported, linking low Self-concepts to reading difficulties, were caused by poor Self-concepts leading to reading difficulties, or by unfortunate experiences in reading undermining Self-concepts.

Their method was to study 128 students from kindergartens in two schools, one serving lower-class, the other middle-class neighborhoods. They measured intelligence, Self-concept, ego-strength, and reading ability of all the students when they were in kindergarten, and then measured these variables again when the students were in the second grade.

The results of this study suggest that, in general, measures of Self-concept and ratings of ego-strength made at the beginning of kindergarten are somewhat more predictive of reading achievement two and one-half years later than are measures of intelligence. This study indicates that the Self attitudes of the kindergarten student stand in a causal relationship to his later achievement in reading.

Obviously, the invisible price tag of a child, his Self, is powerful in its influence. Not only does it influence a child's attitudes toward academic work, but it even influences how the child perceives his teachers' feelings toward him. This is supported by a 1960 study by Davidson & Lang.

Davidson & Lang (1960). Davidson and Lang investigated 4th, 5th and 6th grade childrens' perceptions of their teachers' feelings toward them as related to Self perception, school achievement, and behavior. They wished to determine whether positive correlations exist between childrens' perceptions of their teachers' feelings toward them and the childrens' Self perceptions, favorable perceptions of teachers' feelings and good academic achievement, and favorable perception of teachers' feelings and desirable classroom behavior. They studied the Self-concepts and perceptions of how students thought teachers felt about them of over 200 students. The researchers found that there was a strong relationship between children's perceptions of their teachers' feelings toward them and childrens' Self-perceptions. There was also a significant relationship between favorable perception of teachers' feelings and academic achievement, as well as classroom behavior.

Davidson & Lang concluded that the child with the more favorable image of Self was the one who more likely perceived

his teachers' feelings toward him more favorable. The more positive the childrens' perceptions of their teachers' feelings, the better was their academic achievement and the more desirable their classroom behavior as rated by the teachers.

From this study it seems that the invisible price tag is the screen through which the child perceives the world, particularly his teacher, and that the more positive the child's perception of his teacher's feelings toward him, the better his academic achievement, and the more desirable his classroom behavior. This study suggests that the individual teacher can play a very great role in enabling the child to gain a more positive and realistic view of Self.

Unfortunately, some schools are punishment centered and mistake oriented, failure factories spending a great deal of time teaching many children that they're not much good. From the child's point of view, schools can sometimes be conspiracies, distributing failure and defeat to those very children who most desperately need to experience success. The following study by Morse illustrates how school can increase negative feelings on the part of students.

Morse (1964). To determine the value of the Semantic Differential (which measures dimensions of meanings) as a measure of Self-concept, Morse did a study which measured the shifts in Self attitudes of elementary school students. He administered the Semantic Differential to over 600 students in alternate grades from grade three to eleven in a metropolitan school system.

In analyzing the responses, Morse found that third-grade students responded in a significantly different manner from the other grades, and in the direction of a higher concept of Self at the lower grade level. The sharpest decrease in Self regard was between grades 3 and 5, with some recovery by grade 11. Many of the items of the Sematic Differential showed a *decrease* in Self-esteem with age. Eighty-four per cent of the third-graders were proud of their work in school, compared to only fifty-three per cent of 11th graders.

Without regard to achievement quotients and the fact that failures tend to drop out, the older pupils who remained in school came to feel that they were doing inadequate work. According to Morse, the school appears to grow gradually less positive with

time. It was generalized that the school has communicated a sense of personal failure to many of its students.

The implications of Morse's study are a matter of serious concern, because once a child becomes convinced that he cannot benefit from school and that he is a personal failure when it comes to academic achievement, then the task of the teacher becomes almost impossible. This is particularly true in the area of academic achievement, as we shall see in Part IV: the Self and Academic Achievement.

IV: SELF AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Wise teachers for generations have recognized the significant and positive relationship between a student's concept of Self and his performance in school. Students who feel good about themselves and have confidence in their abilities are those who are most likely to succeed. Conversely, those who see themselves and their abilities in a negative fashion usually fail to achieve. Academic success or failure appears to be as deeply rooted in concepts of Self as it is to measured mental ability, if not deeper. The following reports of recent research suggest the dramatic influence of the Self on academic achievement and the early onset of the pattern associated with chronic underachievement.

Relation between Self and Academic Achievement

Shaw, Edson & Bell, (1960). Up to 1960, studies connecting concepts of Self to academic achievement or underachievement were notable for their absence in the literature. In that year, Shaw, Edson, and Bell conducted a study to determine differences between achievers' and underachievers' perceptions of Self. Their method was to use 20 male and 21 female achievers (cumulative high school GPA 2.0 or above) and 19 male and 27 female underachievers (cumulative GPA 1.75 or below) selected from high school juniors and seniors. All of the subjects in this study had a measured I.Q. of 113 or above, and there were no significant differences between the means of the achiever and underachiever groups on measures of mental ability. The *Sarbin Adjective Checklist* was administered to each subject in order to measure perceived Self.

Shaw, Edson and Bell found that male achievers exceeded underachievers significantly on the following adjectives: stable, realistic, optimistic, enthusiastic, reliable, clear thinking and intelligent. Male underachievers exceeded achievers on: immodest, reckless, relaxed, mischievous, argumentative and restless. Female achievers exceeded underachievers on only two adjectives: ambitious and responsible. Female underachievers, however, exceeded achievers on: fussy, confused, hardheaded, lovable, moody, jolly, unselfish, anxious, mischievous, kind, pleasure-seeking, soft-hearted, easy-going, and considerate.

A major conclusion of the Shaw, Edson & Bell study was that male achievers feel relatively more positive about themselves

than do male underachievers. No simple generalization could be made for the female groups, where there seemed to be some essential (and typically female) contradictions in the adjectives checked. Female underachievers tended to have ambivalent feelings toward themselves.

Fink, (1962). In order to determine whether a relationship exists between academic underachievement and concept of Self, Fink studied a group of 9th grade students in Central Valley, California. He used 20 pairs of boys and 24 pairs of girls, matched for I.Q. All I.Q.'s were in the range 90-110. One achiever and one underachiever made up each pair. The individual student was labeled as underachiever or achiever depending on whether his grade point average fell below or above the class median. The Self image of each student was judged as adequate or inadequate by three separate psychologists, based on data from the *California Psychological Inventory, Bender Visual Motor Gestalt Test, Draw a Person Test, Gough Adjective Checklist,* a personal data sheet, and a student essay: "What I will be in 20 years".

The combined ratings of the three psychologists showed significant differences between achievers and underachievers, with achievers being rated as far more adequate in their concepts of Self. Fink concluded that there is a significant relationship between Self-concept and academic underachievement, and that this relationship appears stronger in boys than in girls.

Shaw & Alves, (1963). In an attempt to verify previous findings by Shaw, Edson and Bell (1960), that bright underachieving male high school students have more negative concepts of Self than equally bright, achieving students, Shaw & Alves employed a different measure of Self: the *Bills' Index of Adjustment and Values.*

The method employed was to study 78 eleventh and twelfth grade students from a California high school of 1,600 students. All the students used in the study had an I.Q. of 110 or higher as measured by the *California Test of Mental Maturity.* Students with a grade point average on previous high school work of 3.0 (B) or above were classified as achievers. Those with grade point average of 2.5 or below were classified as underachievers. Boys and girls in this study were studied separately.

When the *Bills' Index of Adjustment and Values* was employed to measure factors related to Self, Shaw & Alves discovered that male achievers and underachievers were significantly different in three of six variables tested: "Self-concept, Self-acceptance, and peer Self-acceptance". Female achievers and underachievers were significantly different in 2 of 6 variables: "peer Self-concept, and peer Self-acceptance".

From this study, Shaw & Alves concluded that the present study confirmed the results of the previous one: male underachievers have more negative concepts of Self than do achievers. In addition, the study showed that male underachievers were less accepting of Self, and attributed a similar lack of Self-acceptance to their peers. The study indicates that there is a difference in the general perceptual mode between males and females. The negative perceptual attitudes of male underachievers appears to revolve primarily around themselves, while the negative attitudes of female underachievers appears to be centered on the perceptions of others of themselves. The smallest differences between all underachievers and achievers were in perceptions of ideal Self-concepts and ideal Self-concepts of others.

Combs (1964). The purpose of this study was to determine whether academically capable, underachieving high school boys tend to see themselves and their relationships with others in ways that differ from those of students who make a happier and more successful adjustment to the scholastic situation.

Combs used two groups of 25 eleventh grade boys each, from suburban communities in Westchester County, New York. All of the students earned an I.Q. of 115 or better on the *Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale.* Underachievers for this study were defined as those falling below the 25 percentile for eleventh grade students in cumulative grade point average. Achievers were defined as those with cumulative grade point average above the 50 percentile. When the groups were identified, they were administered an apperception instrument consisting of 4 pictures from the *Thematic Apperception Test* and 4 pictures from the *Combs School Apperception Test.* All responses were rated by judges on a 5-step scale in the following areas: sees Self as adequate to inadequate; sees Self as acceptable to unacceptable; sees peers as acceptable to unacceptable; sees adults as acceptable

to unacceptable; approach to problems positive to negative; and freedom of emotional expression positive to negative.

The results of this study indicated highly significant differences between the groups of underachievers and achievers on all of the perceptual variables. The underachievers saw themselves as: less adequate and less acceptable to others; saw peers and adults as less acceptable; showed a less effective approach to problems, and less freedom and adequacy of emotional expression.

Combs concluded that underachieving academically capable high school boys differ significantly from achievers in their perceptions of Self, perceptions of others, and in general and emotional efficiency. Underachievement must be understood as a completely personal and consistent adaptation of the underachiever to his needs and capacities as he uniquely experiences them. A basic reorganization of the Self must be effected before the underachiever's perceptions can encompass success. Only the student with an adequate Self can benefit from stress techniques applied by teachers to bring about desired learning and behavior.

Brookover, Thomas & Paterson (1964). The three purposes of the study by Brookover and associates were: (1) to determine whether Self concept of ability in school is significantly and positively related to academic performance, even with the ability dimension controlled, (2) to see if Self is differentiated into specific Self concepts which correspond to specific subject-matter areas; (3) to see if Self is significantly and positively correlated with students' perceptions of how significant others view the student's ability.

The method employed was to use over a thousand seventh-grade white students (513 boys, 537 girls) in an urban school system. The Self concept of ability for each child was measured with a "Self Concept of Ability Scale" to determine Self concepts of ability in general, and second to measure Self concepts of ability in particular subjects.

After the I.Q. was partialed out, Self concept and grade point average were significantly and positively correlated. Brookover and associates concluded that there is a significant and positive correlation between Self concept and performance in the aca-

demic role: and that this relationship is substantial even when measured I.Q. is controlled. Moreover, there are specific Self concepts of ability related to specific academic areas, which differ from the general Self concept of ability. Finally, the Self concept is significantly and positively correlated with perceived evaluations of the student by other significant people.

In addition to the studies listed here, research which reports that underachievement is related to an inadequate Self concept is presented by Mitchell (1959), Kehas (1963), Crowne and Stephens (1961), Nash (1964), among others. Further, in a recent book *Bright Underachievers* (New York Teachers College Press, 1966) Raph, Goldberg & Passow point out that analyses of students records, teacher rating forms and interviews suggest that underachievers can be distinguished from high achievers both in the attitudes toward school and in their appraisals of themselves. All of these studies point strongly to a direct relationship between attitudes toward Self and academic achievement, and that negative Self attitudes are related to low academic achievement, even when ability levels are equal. Simply stated: Underachievers sadly underestimate themselves.

By this time the reader is probably asking "Which comes first?", "Are differences in Self concept the causes of, or the result of, underachievement?". Unfortunately, the dilemma of ascribing cause or effect to Self concept in scholastic achievement poses problems which have not yet been surmounted by researchers. Yet emerging longitudinal studies like that of Wattenberg & Clifford (1962) provide promising techniques for determining more clearly the interaction between the Self and academic achievement. The Self seems to be the most promising new aspect of the personality of underachievement yet stated.

How The Gifted Student Sees Himself

Comparatively little research has been accomplished on the issue of how intellectually gifted students view themselves. What research that is available refuted the popular notions that gifted students see themselves as superior, are filled with self-satisfaction, or have contempt for their less able peers. In fact, there is evidence to support the argument that gifted students rate themselves unrealistically low, as the following studies point out.

Purkey, (1966). In this study, the problem considered was whether or not the pattern of psychological adjustment of individuals of high intelligence was superior to that of individuals of average intelligence. The technique of the study involved a comparison of test-estimated and self-estimated personality characteristics and an analysis of their congruence.

The method used was a comparison of the adjustive capacities of 95 intellectually gifted high school students (Terman Concept Mastery Test: M= 95.8, SD 18.3) with those of 63 average students (School and College Ability Test, SCAT: M= 288.6, SD 5.9) through the application of multiple criteria of adjustment. These measures of adjustment included inventoried assessment, as measured by the California Psychological Inventory, (CPI) Self-assessment, as measured by the Self-Ranking Inventory, (SRI), and a derived estimate of Self-insight, obtained by considering the congruence of CPI with SRI.

The results of the Purkey study provide considerable substantiation for the contention that gifted high school students are markedly above average in the possession of selected personality characteristics considered to be important in personal and social adjustment. The gifted students scored significantly higher on the California Psychological Inventory. Surprisingly, however, there was little or no support for the contention that gifted students evidence more positive attitudes toward Self (as measured by the Self Ranking Inventory) or that they possess greater clarity of Self-perception (as determined by the congruence of California Psychological Inventory and their own estimates as determined by the Self Ranking Inventory). This study suggests that, while gifted students do have characteristics associated with above-average adjustment, they tend to see themselves as simply average in these qualities. It further suggests that gifted students, contrary to popular belief, do not have greater insight into their own personality makeup.

Werblo and Torrance, (1966). It was the goal of this study to test the hypothesis that gifted children who engage in research, using the process of historiography to investigate their own development, will achieve more realistic Self evaluations in such areas as vocabulary, reading speed, and curiosity.

The method involved 69 sixth graders (35 girls, 34 boys) in 3 classes for high achievers in the Bloomington, Minn. public

schools. The gifted subjects had a normal 6th grade curriculum plus French in the mornings. In the afternoon of alternate weeks they worked with regular teachers on strengths and weaknesses, and on the other weeks, in the afternoon, with specialists in law, government, medicine, psychology, etc, who worked with the students in their specialities. This latter included a course by Torrance on how to do research. As part of this training, the students were asked to estimate on a set of graphs their own growth, including height, curiosity, reading speed, imagination, spelling, independence of thinking, and arithmetic computation. Next, students were asked to indicate the point on each graph where they thought average boys and girls their age would be. Then, students were encouraged to collect as much data as possible to test their hypotheses.

Results of the study showed that Self evaluations of vocabulary, curiosity, and reading speed showed significant changes at the end of the research training, all in the direction of higher Self evaluations. For example, in curiosity, of 53 students rating Selves average or below average at start of the unit, only 28 remained same at the end, with 15 changing to above average.

It was concluded from this study that even gifted, high achieving, and socially well adjusted children tend to underevaluate themselves on such variables as size of vocabulary, reading speed, and curiosity, even after thorough testing and segregation from regular classes. Werblo and Torrance suggest that gifted students can apply concepts of research to attain more realistic Self-evaluations in the areas discussed.

From these studies, it would appear that even bright and achieving students can benefit from educational processes which are designed to give students accurate and positive view of Self.

The Onset of Academic Underachievement

One further question relating to the Self and academic achievement is: "When does underachievement begin?" We're now beginning to recognize that chronic underachievement is definitely present in the early grades and probably begins as early as the first grade. Two studies, Shaw & McCuen (1960) and Teigland, et al. (1966) suggest the early appearance of this problem.

Shaw & McCuen (1960). This study wished to determine whether there is any specific academic level at which under-

achievement begins. Earlier studies by Shaw and Grubb (1958) and by Barrett (1957) showed that patterns of underachievement were present as low as grade 5, but no investigation had examined patterns below grade 5. Shaw & McCuen hypothesized that if it is true that academic underachievement is related to basic personality structure, then such behavior is likely to occur during the early school years.

The method they used was to study a group of 11th and 12th grade students who scored in the upper 25% (above 110) on the *Pinter General Ability Test: Verbal Series,* administered in grade 8. Underachievers included those students who had a cumulative grade point average for grades 9, 10 and 11 below the mean of their class. Achievers had cumulative grade point average above the mean for their class. All subjects in the experiment had attended the same school system since the 1st grade. Underachiever and achiever groups were separated for males and females: 36 male achievers, 36 male underachievers, 45 female achievers and 17 female underachievers. The academic records for all subjects from grade 1 through 11 were obtained and mean grade point averages were computed for each group at each grade level.

The results of the Shaw & McCuen study showed significant differences between male achievers' and underachievers' grade point average beginning at the third grade, while non-significant differences were observed as early as the first grade. The difference in grade point average between the two groups increased at each grade level from grade 3 up to grade 10, where there was a slight decrease. There were no significant differences between female achievers and underachievers prior to grade 9, with non-significant differences visible as early as grade 6. The difference continued and increased through grade 11.

The conclusions drawn by this study were that the problem of underachievement for boys may begin as early as the first grade, is definitely present by grade 3, and becomes increasingly more serious to grade 10. For girls the problem may exist as early as grade 6, is definitely present and of increasing importance from grades 9 to 11. Further, it was shown that underachievement is not a temporary phenomenon, but is chronic in nature. There is need to identify underachievers at as early a grade level as is possible.

Teigland, et al (1966). To determine some of the differences in personality between elementary school achievers and underachievers, Teigland, studied 84 male and 34 female underachievers and the same number of achievers selected from among 700 fourth grade students in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He administered the *California Test of Personality* (CTP) and *Gronlund's Sociometric Test* (GST) designed to measure peer preferences for work, play and sitting together.

Teigland found that there was a significant difference between achievers and underachievers in terms of peer relationships, with achievers being selected more often. Further, achievers scored higher, or toward better adjustment on all CTP scales which include: Self-reliance, sense of personal worth, feeling of belonging, and sense of personal freedom, as well as such measures of behavior as withdrawing tendencies, social skills, anti-social tendencies, family relations, nervous symptoms, social standards, school relations, community relations, and social adjustment.

From his study, Teigland concluded that the peers of underachievers tend to have an overall attitude toward underachievers that is reflected in their relationships with them. The tendency to reject underachievers held not only for work but for play and social situations as well. The greater lack of personality adjustment for underachievers as indicated by the CTP suggests that those concomitants of underachievement found at the secondary and college levels are also present at the elementary levels. There is the further suggestion that the pattern associated with underachievement is fairly well established by the fourth grade and continues through the higher grades.

From these and other studies it seems clear that academic underachievement is related to basic personality structure, particularly inadequate concepts of Self, and that such behavior is likely to occur during the early elementary school years. The recognition of the early onset of academic difficulty, coupled with its relationship with concepts of Self, should give educators valuable ideas on what steps to take to prevent the development of this chronic difficulty. The next section will deal with the teacher's task in developing adequate Selves in students.

V. TASK OF THE TEACHER

No printed word nor spoken plea
Can teach young minds what men should be,
Not all the books on all the shelves
But what the teachers are themselves.

Anonymous

So far in this monograph we've seen how the individual Self begins, how it is reflected in everything a person does, and how it relates to his academic achievement. Now we will turn our attention to the task of the teacher: to help each child gain a positive image of himself as a learner. In pursuing this task, two assumed characteristics of the Self need to be remembered. The first of these is the recognition that the Self is remarkably conservative.

Once a child has formed a negative image of himself as a learner, the task of the teacher becomes extremely difficult. The Self resists change, and for a very good reason. If the Self varied much, the individual would lack a consistent personality. No matter how negative his Self may be, who and what he is is very important to the child, and just about anything is better than no Self at all.

So it is that the Self resists change as much as possible in order to enjoy a consistent and organized world. However, the Self will change if the need is great enough, which brings us to a second assumed characteristics of Self: that the maintenance and enhancement of the perceived Self is the motive of all behavior. If the child sees the educative process as personally meaningful and enhancing, and if the degree of threat provided by the school experience is not overpowering, then the child will learn in school. Very few children want to be failures as students, just as few teachers want to be failures at teaching. The following studies will illustrate how the Self resists change, yet how change is possible when situations are conducive to change.

Engel (1959). The purpose of Engel's research was to investigate the stability of the Self over a two-year period of adolescence. A secondary goal was to study the relationship between the degree of stability and the quality of Self concept during this period.

The method employed was to measure the Self concepts of 48 boys and 56 girls from grade 8 and 28 boys and 40 girls from grade 10, most of whom were in the lower middle and middle class. After a two-year interval, the concepts of Self were measured again with the same measure, a locally devised 100-item Q-sort covering areas of self concern to adolescents. The test-retest reliability of the Q-sort over 10 days was .68. The *Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory* (MMPI) was administered to the subjects to determine adjustment levels.

Conclusions from this study support the contention of the stability of the Self concept. Subjects who persisted in negative Self concepts gave more evidence of maladjustment as measured by the MMPI than those who persisted in positive Self concepts. Subjects who shifted in a negative direction showed greater maladjustment on the MMPI, while those who shifted in a positive direction showed better adjustment. Over 60 per cent of students maintained stable Self concepts.

This study appears to indicate that: (1) the Self concept is resistant to change, (2) that students who persist in negative Self concepts are more likely to give greater evidence of maladjustment, (3) that students with negative Self concepts have less stability in Self concepts, and (4) those students who do show more regard for themselves also shift toward more adjustment.

Staines (1958). In a study of the Self as a factor in the classroom, Staines posed the following questions: "What part do teachers play in the development of the child's Self?" "Can teachers change the child's Self-picture if they try to do so?" "If they can, what methods of teaching produce what kinds of Self-picture?" "Is it possible to distinguish between teachers in the frequency and kind of comment which they make about the child's Self?" The basic assumption of the study was that since teachers are an important aspect of the child's environment, it is likely that they have some effect on the child's emerging Self.

The method involved careful observation, recording, and analyzing data from teacher-child and child-child interaction in four elementary school classrooms. Data were collected on the educational outcomes of the interaction between personalities in the atmosphere of the classroom, with particular attention given to identifying those teachers who could be reliably distinguished

by the frequency of their use of words and kinds of situational management which, in the opinion of competent judges who served as observers, are likely to mold the Self of each student. Students were tested with a "Self-rating Card Test."

Results of the investigation showed marked differences between teachers in the frequency of Self-reference in their comments, particularly in their positive or negative comments on the child's performance, status, and self-confidence or potency. (For example, "You're better at sums than you are at spelling." "Let Rosemary come to the front, she's small." "We expect more from you because you're older." and so on). In addition, it was found that it is possible to teach so that, while aiming at the normal results of teaching, specific changes can be made in the Self-picture. The teacher who studied the Self-ratings of his students and then deliberately tried to teach so that certain Self-ratings were changed, was successful. Statistically significant changes were found in dimensions of Self which indicated greater psychological security.

It was concluded from this study that changes in the child's Self do occur as an outcome of the learning situation, and that the Self must be recognized as a hitherto unnoticed factor occuring in every learning situation. Teaching methods can be adapted so that definite changes of the kind sought for will occur in the Self without loss of academic gain in the process. The next study by Frankel (1964) describes how this was accomplished in a summer advanced studies program.

Frankel (1964). This study illustrates the effects of a program of advanced summer study on the Self perceptions of academically talented high school students. Its' purpose was to determine any changes in Self attitudes of academically talented high school students participating in a summer advanced studies program.

The method involved the study of 103 boys and 55 girls attending the 6-week Advanced Studies Program, St. Paul's School, Concord, New Hampshire. The subjects of this study had completed 10th, 11th, or 12th grade, and their mean SCAT score was in the 96 percentile. The Self attitude of each student was measured at the beginning and end of the program using a 27 item Inventory of Self Attitudes with a 5 point scale for each

item. The inventory measured: Self concept of present ability; ideal concept; and difference between the two.

Results of this study showed that the mean of Self concept scores showed a significant increase at end of the program. Fifteen items showed significant gains: ability to make decisions and assume leadership; Self-confidence; special talents, such as athletic, musical, dramatic, mechanical, or artistic; ability to take criticism; sense of humor; disposition; speak before groups; and eagerness to learn. No significant change was noted in ideal Self concept.

Conclusions drawn from this study were that the Self concepts of the group did show significant gains after attending the Advanced Studies Program, particularly in the areas of self-reliance and special talents. The ideal Self concepts remained constant, a pattern generally found among academically gifted students. Growth in both Self-image and satisfaction derived from academic pursuits seemed to be the result of the summer program. The program also provided incentive to maintain high levels of aspiration.

Frankel's study seems to suggest that Self concepts can be modified upward when optimal situations are available. This brings us to the central question: What is the task of the teacher?

Building Positive and Accurate Self concepts

Four steps seem particularly valuable for the teacher to follow in building adequate and realistic Self concepts in his students. These are: (1) to see each student as a person of worth and dignity, (2) to provide an educational atmosphere characterized by warmth, respect, and safety, (3) to be sensitive to how students are seeing things, and (4) to convince each student that he is capable of coping with school's expectations. A brief discussion of each of these assumptions follows.

To see each student as a person of worth and dignity. A number of studies (Fiedler (1950), Robers (1958), Combs & Soper (1963)) seem to support the contention that one of the most important characteristics of the helper in his attitude toward the people he is trying to help. Successful helpers seem to be those who are personally concerned with the people with whom they work as worthy and dignified human beings. While these find-

ings relate primarily to counseling, they appear applicable to good teaching as well. If the teacher genuinely values and respects each student, this will be reflected in everything he does. As Davidson & Lang (1960) found, when students feel that teachers value them, then they are likely to value themselves.

To provide an educational atmosphere characterized by warmth, respect, and safety. There is considerable evidence to support the assumption that a psychologically safe and supportive learning situation encourages students to grow academically as well as in feelings of personal worth. Cogan (1958) reported that students with warm, considerate teachers produced unusual amounts of original poetry and art. Christensen (1960) found warmth of teachers significantly related to student vocabulary and arithmetic achievement. Reed (1962) concluded that teachers characterized as considerate, understanding and friendly with a tolerance for some release of emotional feeling by students had a favorable influence on students' interest in science.

Relating more directly to the Self, Spaulding (1964) supported the findings of previous investigators regarding positive relationships between learner-centered and supportive group atmosphere and positive attitudes toward the Self. Spaulding found significant correlations between height of Self concept and the degree to which the teachers in his study were calm, acceptant, supportive, and facilitative. It is interesting to note that significant **negative** correlations with pupil height of Self concept were found with dominative, threatening, grim, and sarcastic teacher behavior.

A supportive educational atmosphere is one in which each student is made to feel that he belongs in school, that he is important, and that he is capable of learning. It is one in which praise is used in preference to punishment, courtesy is used in preference to sarcasm, and consultation is used in preference to dictation.

To be sensitive to how the student is seeing things. Sensitivity is a term which is used to serve many purposes and to describe many processes. In this paper it is defined as the ability to sense what an individual feels about himself and the world. Sensitivity first requires the honest **desire** to become aware of how others are experiencing things. This sounds simple, but

the fact is that many people don't take the necessary time and trouble to be sensitive to others. After the desire must come the habit of really listening, and listening for meanings rather than words. For instance, a student might say that he does not wish to try, when he means that it is better not to try, than to try and be wrong.

Entering a person's private world in order to understand how he is seeing things is difficult, for the individual Self can only be approached through the perceptions of some person, perceptions filled with all sorts of prejudices, aspirations, and anxieties. Fortunately, however, most teachers have a great supply of sensitivity, as do most humans. It's just a matter of applying this sensitivity more deliberately to teaching. To the degree to which a teacher is able to predict how his students are viewing themselves, their subject, and the world, to that degree he is in a position of becoming a successful teacher.

To convince each student that he is capable of coping with the school's expectations. As we have seen in the studies by Davidson & Lang (1960), Brookover, Thomas, & Paterson (1964), and others, people significant to another person can profoundly influence that person's concept of Self. For example, Rosen, Levinger, and Lippitt (1960) found a positive relationship between a person's desire for change and the wishes of others for him. There can be little question that teachers, through their roles of significant others, can alter the Self concepts of their students by providing positive educational experiences.

Specific suggestions as to ways in which a student can be helped to gain a more positive image of himself as a learner might include the following:

- Utilize teaching procedures which provide each student with honest, success experiences. Certainly every student is capable of achieving successfully in some area.
- Demonstrate a continuing faith in each student's ability to achieve. When he has gained confidence in his own abilities, his ability to learn is enhanced.

- Point out areas of accomplishment, rather than focusing on mistakes. Continuing awareness of failure results in lowered expectations, not learning.
- Consult with the student, listen to him and support him in his attempts to express himself.

With these and other techniques, each student can be helped to have a sense of accomplishment and a feeling that he can cope with school. It can be summed up by a statement of Arthur Combs: "a positive view is learned from the ways people treat the learner. People learn that they are able, not from failure, but from success."

It is hoped that this small booklet has given teachers a clearer understanding of the relationship of the Self to academic achievement, for next to the family, it is usually the individual teacher who exerts the greatest influence on the young person's emerging Self. As we have seen here, the teacher's responsibility is great—his opportunities are even greater.

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